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U.S. Probers In Spy Case Leave Israel

Justice Dept. Team Interviewed Officials

By William Claiborne
and Joe Pichirallo
Washington Post Foreign Service

JERUSALEM, Dec. 19—The team of U.S. Justice Department officials investigating Israel's connections with accused spy Jonathan Jay Pollard left here tonight after a week of intensive interviews with principals in the case.

Neither the Israeli government nor the American investigators made any comment on the outcome of the inquiry, or on what evidence had been unearthed in connection with the prosecution of Pollard, a 31-year-old civilian intelligence analyst for the U.S. Navy who was arrested on Nov. 12 on charges of selling classified information to Israeli contacts in Washington.

The U.S. investigators left Israel as they arrived—shrouded by extraordinary security and a declared news blackout that was stringently adhered to by both sides to the end of the visit.

Despite tensions over charges that the U.S. government had exerted pressure in an attempt to force fuller disclosure of official Israeli involvement in the espionage case, no recriminations surfaced as the U.S. team left Jerusalem to board a Tel Aviv-New York flight on El Al, Israel's national carrier.

"I feel they have left with a good feeling. If we achieved something, we achieved it together. The spirit of cooperation prevailed, even if it had to overcome obstacles sometimes," a senior official in the Israeli Foreign Ministry said tonight.

He added, "For us, it was somewhat problematical, because we did something unprecedented."

The official was referring to Israel's decision to make available to the U.S. investigators two Israeli science attaches who had been identified in press reports as Pollard's contacts in the Israeli Embassy in Washington when Pollard allegedly sold top-secret documents to Israel.

The Israeli diplomats, Ilan Ravid and Yosef Yagur, who both left Washington shortly after Pollard was arrested, still retain diplomatic immunity. Israeli officials noted pointedly that normally in espionage cases, diplomats implicated by law enforcement officials of the host country are allowed to leave quietly without having to undergo interrogation there. They said that it was unheard of for diplomats implicated in espionage cases to be questioned in their own country by foreign investigators.

The U.S. team also reportedly interviewed Rafael (Rafi) Eitan, a former adviser on counterterrorism to Prime Minister Shimon Peres and former prime minister Menachem Begin. Eitan has been identified by Israeli sources as the head of the covert intelligence-gathering wing of a scientific research unit known as Lekem that reportedly recruited and controlled Pollard.

Israeli sources said the U.S. investigators were allowed to examine documents allegedly stolen by Pollard and passed to his Israeli contacts, although it remained unclear tonight whether the Americans were taking any of the documents back to Washington.

Last week, Israeli government sources said that none of the stolen documents would be sent back to Washington, but that the U.S. team could examine them here at leisure.

Israeli officials had expressed concern during the U.S. team's stay here that if they openly contributed too much to the prosecution of Pollard, they might compromise Israeli intelligence operations worldwide by signaling a lack of resolve to stand behind operatives working in other friendly countries.

The U.S. investigating team did not finish its work at an undisclosed location in Tel Aviv until 4 a.m. today, after which the members arrived bleary-eyed back at their Jerusalem hotel. Later today, the Justice Department investigators were taken on a tour of Jerusalem's Old City for last-minute shopping before they departed from Tel Aviv's Ben-Gurion International Airport for the nonstop flight to New York.

The head of the U.S. team, State Department legal adviser Abraham Sofaer, arrived here on Dec. 11 and is scheduled to leave on Friday. The others arrived the next day.

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